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ABSTRACT

One of the implied characteristics of competency-based teacher education is the allegedly systematic nature of the program. Attempts have been made to place CBTE within some philosophical tradition. But CBTE is actually a theoretically based teaching strategy employing parts of teaching theory, primarily prescriptive, and learning theory, primarily descriptive. The influence of a teacher's attitudes and values on pupil learning should not be overlooked. The competencies that have been identified have been derived empirically rather than from analysis of a conception. A stipulation should be made that competencies should be stated in assessable terms or not used. The use made of the word "performance" and the lack of time limits for completion lend ambiguity to the concept of CBTE. Participation in the program is described as broad-based decision-making, but to expect students to design the program is to ask for the finished product at the program's initiation. The inadequacy of the conception of teacher role and the absence of questions concerning the actual and continuing performance of those who have demonstrated their ability to perform are other weaknesses in CBTE. Of paramount importance is the fact that apparently no distinctions are drawn about the values of the various competencies. Too little attention is paid to the affective and cognitive domains. In addition, the individualization of instruction claimed for CBTE is not really individualized. The research to be done in learning and the relation between teacher performance and pupil learning are further reasons to question the soundness of CBTE. (KM)

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Some Philosophical Issues in Competency-Based Teacher Education

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From the time educators became self-conscious of our profession we have looked to the great teacher as a model for our activities. Generations of students have not only read The Dialogues, The Republic, Emile and School and Society, but they have been guided to a critical appraisal of the educational methods described in these classics. This was done very often with an imaginative reconstruction of the application of those ideas to the present. In addition, the implications of their adopting one or another-a combination of styles in their own teaching was part of the process of their preparation as teachers. In short, the presentation of models of educational systems and models of the "great teacher" offered students the opportunity to engage in conceptual analysis.

The addition of student-teaching was an attempt to weld theory and practice. This is neither the time nor the place to review the vast literature devoted to questioning which courses should precede others, or at what stage of a teacher's preparation they should be taken

What is important, I believe, is to set CBTE within the context of teacher preparation in order to understand and appraise this effort. Anything less than a constant critique running parallel to and informing proposed educational practices would allow educational hucksters, who are always waiting in the wings, to take over center stage. Therefore, let us not be influenced by a bandwagon effect caused by such statements as: " It should be obvious that PBTE is a trend that is definitely catching on in educational circles. Laymen as well as teachers are "tuning in" to this kind of thinking[1] or, there is "growing pressure to suggest a reform movement of great potential is in the making."[2]

Neither should we reject out of hand proposals for the improvement of teacher education. Without doubt the current push in educational circles is interest in

competency-based teacher education. Before this "push" comes to "shove" perhaps it would be profitable to examine some of the philosophical assumptions that are implied in the idea and to suggest directions for exploration.

The AACTE invited S. Elam to write the pamphlet, "Performance-based Teacher Education:"What is the state of the art"? and his lucid explanation will serve as the primary basis for my analysis.

The description of PBE consists of 5 essential elements:

1. Competencies (knowledge, skills, behaviors) to be demonstrated are:

   a) derived from explicit competence of teacher roles
   b) stated so as to make possible assessment of a student's behavior in relation to specific competencies,and
   c) make public in advance;

2. Criteria to be employed in assessing competency are:

   a) based upon and in harmony with, specified competencies
   b) explicit in stating expected levels of mastery under specified conditions, and
   c) made public in advance;

3. Assessment of the student's competency

   a) uses his performance as the primary source of evidence
   b) takes into account evidence of the student's knowledge relevant to planning for, analyzing, interpreting or evaluating situations or behavior, and
   c) strives for objectivity;

4. The student's rate of progress through the program is determined by demonstrated competency rather than by time or course completion;

5. The instruction program is intended to facilitate the development and evaluation of the student's achievement of competencies specified.

"These elements are generic, essential elements and only programs that include <u>all</u> fall within the definition of P.B.T.E;" [3]

There are several ideas that are found in the above elements that are used uncritically and with systematic ambiguity. It will be the purpose of this paper to identify and clarify those concepts.

Among the implied characteristics is the allegedly "systematic" nature of the program. That is, that the purpose determines the nature of the process and the critical measure of the system is the accuracy with which the product reflects the purpose. But what is the purpose? A competent teacher? But according to the definition of the word 'system' the critical measure of the system would be the improved learning of the children.

Although there has been no thoroughly developed philosophical position to support CBTE, some attempts have been made by some people to place this effort in one or another philosophical tradition. An examination of the claims made by a few of these writers should dispel the erroneous assumptions which attempt to justify educational practices. In this way we will be able to objectively explore the strengths and limitations of CBTE without the mistaken importation of authorities to support or vitiate the ideas.

In one paper, Klingstedt claims the genesis of CBTE is Experimentalism. The writer, in a naive and erroneous rendering of this philosophical position joins it with the ideas of some experimental psychologists and then offers the following justification for CBTE:

> Performance-based educational programs placed an emphasis on changing the learner's behavior or performance. From an emphasis on performances identified by "immediate suggestion", the movement became more focused and attempted to zero in on performances arrived at, through reason which were designed to guarantee a given competency level. In the Experimentalist tradition, the method used to define competency was the same as Dewey's scientific method, e.g., in the area of teacher education the "felt difficulty" was that teachers were not being adequately prepared; the "immediate suggestion" varied according to the situation. Following the emotional reaction, reason was brought to bear and a hypothesis or "contemplative theory" was formulated. Following this,

> procedures were established for testing the hypothesis; and, finally, constant reexamination of the program was built in. Experimentalists would support this approach because of their faith in the scientific method and its role in research. The faith in research exhibited by people within the CBE movement indicates their confidence in the compatibility of psychological data and educational practice (a fundamental idea of Experimentalism).[4]

What we have here is an attempt to link Dewey's reading of the logic of inquiry with the methods employed by CBE and the juncture of the two by their "faith" in research. I believe a correct reading of Dewey, would indicate that the problem, whether it originated in a "felt difficulty" of emotional or cognitive origin would lead to the development of testable hypotheses which had taken the possible consequences into account. These hypotheses were tentative and were to be altered as they were informed by practice. The constant reexamination that Klingstedt alludes to was not to be an intellectual exercise in the compatability of the program with the proposed solution, or an observation of the effect. It was, in fact, an alteration of the program in the light of practice. This alteration was thus a possible reformulation of the original hypothesis. The "faith" Dewey had was not in research done in a laboratory, but ideas in action, in practice, and informed by an hypothesis that was being tested. It is to be hoped that Klingstedt and others are aware of Peirce's essay on the "Fixation of Belief", and the danger he describes of fixing one's belief by the method of authority! Whether Dewey, Skinner or any other person is responsible for the genesis of an idea, one is fighting a straw man if one denies the compatability of psychological research and educational practice.

The writings on CBTE current at this time seem to suggest that there is a teaching theory which is either being explicated or a "fruitful hypothesis" formulated.

If we take theory in its traditional sense, surely one can find little or nothing that has been written about the nature of society, the nature of human beings, or the

good life. There is nothing that resembles The Republic, Emile or even Walden II. In short, the proposals developed so far do not present us with the large canvas that purports to describe or prescribe for American education.

If, on the other hand, we employ "theory" in a narrower sense, i.e., a series of "laws" or regularities covered by a fruitful theory or a hypothesis of predictive value, we come closer to what CBTE seems to be. Although Elam states that his elements are "theoretically based" what we are presented with is a "strategy," that seems to have its genesis in psychological research, but is concerned with teaching.

Perhaps if we accept a rather simple distinction between teaching theories and learning theories we might be able to better understand Elam's statement that CBTE is "theoretically-based". "Teaching theories are primarily prescriptive."[5] That is, they are concerned with what we "ought" to do "facilitate certain kinds of learning." These suggestions are bound up with our beliefs about what is worth teaching.

Learning theories are primarily descriptive in nature. That is, they explain or describe how learning occurs. Of course, there is an implicit view of human behavior and the sources of knowledge. For example, Skinnerian behaviorism is "rooted in the belief that the only reliable source of human knowledge is that which can be directly observed."

An examination of CBTE in the light of the distinction above suggests that it is neither one nor the other, though perhaps a little of both. We are offered a proposal telling us how to facilitate learning but almost nothing about what is worth teaching. On the other hand, if we consider CBTE from the standpoint of a learning theory, it is defective in that it does not offer a "consistent and coherent body of explanations."

The avowed goal of CBTE is the preparation of competent teachers. Note, it

is not to prepare great, excellent, good, inspiring or dynamic teachers, but to prepare competent ones. How is this to be achieved? Of what does the preparation consist? We are offered the "essential elements" by Elam, who says that:

> Some authorities consider it "potentially superior to traditional strategies for developing the teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to facilitate pupil learning."[6]
>
> However, just five pages later he says, "There now appears to be general agreement that a teacher education program is performance-based if: competencies (knowledge, skills, behaviors) to be demonstrated by the student."[7]

No reason is offered for excluding the word "attitudes" offered in the initial definition and the substitution of the word "behaviors".

Although the current writing on CBTE makes innumerable references to the social and political ferment in society, and in the schools, no explanation is offered to deleting the target of many community criticisms of teachers. Also, the work of Rosenthal & Jacobs - "Pygmalion in the Classroom" and others who are concerned with the effect of middle class values or ethnic values suggest that a teacher's attitudes are a highly significant item in determining pupil learning. One must hope that it was not the lack of assessment measures that caused the deletion for surely that would suggest that the imperfect state of measurement is the decisive factor in the determination of what we will try to identify and develop in teachers!

Another essential element is that competencies are role-derived from explicit conceptions. In fact, the competencies that have been identified have not been logically derived through analysis of a conception, but rather empirically adduced. In any case, the lists of competencies being developed are formidable compendia.

A further requirement is that the competencies must be identified and be so stated that the student who is supposedly demonstrating the competency can thereby be assessed. In short, a stipulation is made that a competency can be stated in

assessable terms, and that which cannot--well, it is dropped from list or perhaps placed on waiting list. The criteria employed in assessing competencies are dealt with by Prof. Turner in another paper of the symposium.

The student's performance is used as the primary source of evidence although what is meant by "performance" is not clear. One wonders if non-verbal performance is acceptable --and how would one assess it? And if we can't assess the raised eyebrow or a shrug of the shoulder, will these performances also be placed on waiting list?

Much is made of the fact that the rate by which a student progresses through the programs is determined by competence not "time or course completion." We might see an additional six months or a year as attending to individual differences, but will the program planners allow five years? ten years? Is there any limit to the resources spent on an individual? While we may applaud the effort to remove narrow restrictions on entrance requirements surely there will be some requirements! Those may not be easily identified at this time, but the impression given is that any one may enter and receive individualized attention. Perhaps only a few will enter? One can only speculate although the end of the teacher shortage is mentioned several times.

Participation in the program is described as broad based decision making. Thus such groups as college faculty, students, public school personnel, even multi-institutional patterns of participation are possible in the community. However, we are also told the actual designers of the instructional system are the students and the teachers. To suggest that students can design or help design a program of performances that will prepare them to develop into a competent teacher for the real world of teaching, is to ask for the finished product at the initiation of the program.

Finally, when the student has reached the point of an "adequate conception of the goals of teaching" role integration takes place. What is this role? Well, the student moves from mastery of specific techniques toward "diagnosis and selective utilization of such techniques in combination." Anyone who has taught--not trained--but taught pre-service teachers will certainly recognize this as an aborted description of the teacher role.

As mentioned above, a major claim made for CBTE is that the program is systematic[8] and that the purpose determines the nature of the process. If the purpose is to improve or alter the education of young children, then the admission by everyone writing in the field that there is not enough knowledge about the relationship between teacher-behavior and pupil-learning strongly suggests that it would not be wise to mandate one process for teacher education. New York State has set a time table for CBTE that is already moving many institutions in this direction. The ends or goals of education whether for children in the urban school setting in 1990 are surely not known now. Thus the process suggested is just one of many strategies that might be employed. And the description of the process, it has been noted, barely takes into account the "world of informal learning, the streets, TV, friends, libraries and museums."[9]

The proponents of CBTE --share Plato's assumption concerning man, i.e., to know the good is to do the good, because nowhere are questions raised concerning the actual and continuing performance of those who have demonstrated their ability to perform. Research done by Horner[10] indicates that most women who are capable will not perform as well as they are able to if placed in a competitive situation with men. The point to be noted is that performance as an isolated factor is not an accurate reflection of a person's ability as might appear. Those variables such as, the classroom itself, years of teaching and sex, etc., are factors that will

influence the actual performance on the job.

The area, most neglected and probably of paramount importance is the problem of values. There are apparently no differences in values among the various competencies. What competence is of most worth? What guiding principles will the teacher use in setting up a field situation? The uncritical use of the word "experience" suggests that the writers believe that by placing a student in a field situation the values will emerge from the situation itself.

What is confusing is the talk about improving and strengthening teacher education, and the imprecision concerning the quality and extent of participation by those not traditionally responsible for teacher training.

There are several questions, while not of apparent importance if one considers the substantive portions of the CBTE program, take on vital importance if we consider the whole educational enterprise.

The first question that presents itself is the lack of attention to the affective domain. It is not enough to say that all of the performances are pervaded by the affective. And, it is surely not enough to say, "Objectives to develop the affective behaviors--those in the realm of attitudes, beliefs, and relationships--resist precise definition and thereby preclude the precise assessment which competency-based approaches seek." We do not have to be reminded of the research on the electric shocks to subjects which were administered by students who were performing according to the directions they received from their instructors. If we do not concern ourselves with the humanistic aspect of education what kind of teachers will we be preparing?

Teacher education has for many years included performance as part of its certification requirements. If CBTE is an attempt to rationalize what has previously

been sporadic and arbitrary, then this attempt deserves attention. Perhaps, a more fruitful approach would be to consider, as does Daniel,[11] that the continuum should be perceived as performance-based at one end and non-performance factors (personality traits, intelligence test scores, knowledge of subject matter) at the other. "There is no agreement," he states, however, "as to how far such a movement should go and how fast such a movement should proceed."

The second question is the lack of attention to the cognitive domain. Although the question of values seems not to be an important concern of the program developers of CBTE, when the area is discussed there is much that is assumed about the preparation of teachers. For example, one of the booklets, "Developing Instructional Modules," states, "Designers of teacher education programs, by identifying the type of objectives they set, and by emphasizing the more powerful ones, can improve the programs they design."[12]

The classification system includes four types of objectives:

cognitive-based
performance-based
consequence-based
exploratory

Which of the four is most powerful? That is, if one understood what is meant by "powerful". No matter! In the paragraph preceding the quotation the authors state that in competency-based teacher education, "greater emphasis is placed on performance and consequence objectives than on cognitive objectives."[13] In short, more attention is paid to performing and causing change in others than in developing a sound knowledge base from which to operate. If there is justification for their choice, it is not made apparent to those who are learning how to develop a module. But, then again, why should it be? The authors are demonstrating that they can have the reader perform and change behavior (write a module) while relegating to the less important domain the cognitive concerns.

If the reader's interest is piqued and is wondering what a consequence-based

objective is, perhaps this example will prove illustrative.

> "At the consequence level, the prospective teacher demonstrates that he can, for example, motivate pupils and change their attitudes. An example of a consequence objective of this area is:
>
> > The prospective teacher plans and teaches a unit on dental health which results in 40% of his pupils demonstrating a positive attitude about care of the teeth by voluntarily brushing their teeth after lunch."[14]

This example raises several questions concerning teacher performance. Would the teacher be judged competent if 10% of the students brushed their teeth? If 80% brushed after lunch but not in the morning or the evening? If the children could go to the sink without asking permission to brush their teeth but were restricted during the remainder of the day, would that fact be a consideration in determining a "positive attitude?" And to what extent were the children motivated by a supportive home that encouraged teeth-brushing behavior?

Prof. Broudy has responded to the assumption that "in teaching the whole is merely the sum of its parts." His succinct refutation of that belief is equally applicable to another assumption implicit in the work of CBTE.[15] Although mention is made of the differentiated staff patterns in schools, we also know that many schools are using team-teaching while others are developing variations of "open-education." If CBTE is assuming that four competent teachers working together does <u>not</u> provide a qualitative difference in the performance than what would have been apparent in the addition of the four disparate performances, then here is certainly an area of investigation that has been overlooked!

The claim is made throughout the writings on CBTE that individualization of instruction is of paramount importance. However, the individualization is localized

within the pattern set by the specificity of performances agreed to in advance. No provision is made for the student, who, perhaps is better able to understand the nature of the problem, if the problem as a whole is set before him and then proceeds to an analysis of the components that make up the whole. What of the student who has an opportunity to observe or work with a few children and from that experience begins to identify and isolate the skills that he needs to develop into a competent teacher? This is the "felt need" that Dewey wrote about which was the impelling force for learning.

If we examine some of the competencies that have been enumerated, we will be in a position to make wiser recommendations.

Consider the following:

> "cause a student to feel free to seek knowledge, invent and try out ideas, and create?[16]
> "cause a student to perceive the relevance of his learning?[17]
> "organize and manage the classroom efficiently"[18]
> "help children develop an inclusive patriotism" [19]

This brief sample of competencies should be sufficient to illustrate that any listing of supposed competencies without the activities that would provide the meaning through directly testable statements eventuates in an empty concept of that competency. If these ideas are to acquire any meaning for the student there must be the opportunity for him to develop a repertoire of possible behaviors that he could, in fact, use in a classroom. We must surely ask, what would constitute confirmation that a student was able to "cause a student to feel free to seek knowledge," etc.? What would the class have to do to demonstrate that the student was competent to do this? Or, if as is presently the case, the child is not considered, what would the trainer accept as the "required" level of performance? And how does one justify the level? 80%, 90%, why not 5%?

The questions asked above are not intended to give the impression that developing

a program is an easy task. Pai points to this difficulty when he states,

> "Putting a subject in sequence can be done according to the complexity of the materials, or the difficulty of the terminal behavior, or the logical structure of the subject, or a natural order inherent in the subject (e.g., history can be taught as a chronological sequence of events). Unfortunately none of these approaches to sequence has proven itself consistently useful."

The difficulty of organizing the material has also been noted by Skinner, himself, who says that "the most advantageous and effective programming is accomplished when sequence is based on the teacher's knowledge of the student's attainment and direction."

There is an admission by those who propose and those people who oppose CBTE that there has not been sufficient research in the relation between teacher performance and pupil learning. Yet, the raison d'etre of CBTE is to improve the education of teachers so that children will learn more. I will do no more here than note again this lacunae. However, it would be remiss not to point to other aspects of this problem.

We are well aware of the fact that observation of objects, people and events provides the opportunity for the child to obtain information. We do not know, however, just how the child processes this information or how this processing can be facilitated. Additionally, children do not demonstrate every act they observe. "More basic," asks Stevenson, "is the question of the factors that control what the child observes in the first place, for the child cannot attend to all of the behaviors that are displayed in his environment."[20] Let us not forget that the sex of the child plays a part not only in its receptivity to praise but in performance itself. Horner's work has demonstrated not only the distinction between ability and performance, but the role sex plays in impairing performance under some conditions.

A final distinction that should be drawn is that between learning and performing.

Hilgard reminds us that, "learning must always remain an inference from performance and only confusion will result if performance and learning are identified."[21] He points to the fact that under the use of drugs or intoxicants the learned behavior fails. But we know that the person can exhibit that learned behavior at a later time, without any intervening training.

The implications of the adoption of a competency-based teacher education program are vast and the topic too important to spend time considering the writings of men who say, "it is better to have a 'feel' of the concept than it is to explicate all of its nuances and subtleties" and then write, "Because these plans (accountability) are comprehensive action systems, they avoid the narrow conception of teaching competencies. They avoid the 'myth' that if each teacher only had a 'basic set' of skills and used it, the children would inevitably learn."

The purpose of this paper was not to play the role of Cassandra and prophesy doom, but to contribute to our understanding of the meaning of the idea of a competency-based teacher education program.

NOTES

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4. Klingstedt, p. 11.
5. Pai, Young, Teaching, Learning and the Mind. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1973, p.p.6-8. The distinction between teaching and learning theories draws on Pai's analysis.
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